open wide our hearts

the enduring call to love *a pastoral letter against racism*

Practical Steps for Eradicating Racism: An Invitation

This Guide was prepared to assist Catholics and people of good will in reflecting on the evil and harm of racism. While this is not a comprehensive list, it provides actionable steps that may assist Catholics to reflect and respond in faith. With the aid of Holy Scripture, Catholic social teaching, and sacred tradition, this is an open invitation to journey toward reconciliation.

Racism is evil because it attacks the inherent dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. The persistence of racism demands our attention now. Racism emerges in the actions and inactions of individuals; and it is embedded in our institutions and public policies. Our faith calls us both to personal conversion and to transformation of our society.

The following are some actionable steps pastors and their communities may undertake to this end:

1. Read (or re-read) ***Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*** using the accompanying Study Guide. Visit usccb.org/racism.

2. Create various large and small group opportunities for family and community members to process their feelings in the midst of news and commentary about vulnerable populations and law enforcement. Encourage participants to reflect or share their own upbringing regarding comments in the home, from parents and individuals, media and entertainment, even practices of the Church about the merits or demerits of certain groups of people made to be "the other." Ask. "How have I knowingly or unconsciously made this formation part of my world view? Where could I have spoken up but didn't?"

3. Arrange a safe space for young people to reflect and pray about racism and recent events. Listen to the current experiences of young people. Encourage and allow their creative expression. Invite them to generate methodologies that are meaningful to them.

4. Attend an intergenerational interracial virtual town hall discussion on racism. Respect that for some African Americans, Hispanics and others, talking about personal racial experiences in a mixed race setting is painful as it is like reopening a wound that hadn't fully healed.

5. Use a pastoral and non-partisan lens to respond to concerns of family and community members about racism, policing and public safety. Do not politicize this. Lean on Gospel values, instead.

6. Contact your pastor, parish council or diocesan office to discuss possible ways to dialogue with local law enforcement. Some community organizations funded by the bishops through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) are leading these efforts in their communities. See what is happening near you.

7. Learn about structural racism and its roots in in your community and get involved in the work to address it. It might look like housing discrimination that continues to contribute to segregated communities or disparate access to quality education.

8. Invite your parish to incorporate regular dialogue among parishioners about their experiences with racism, prejudice and racial discrimination.

9. Invite your parish or faith-sharing group to host a conversation with a group of African American, Latino, Indigenous or African men and/or young people about their personal experiences with law enforcement.

10. Encourage religious education classes and faith-sharing groups, as well as priests and deacons at your parish to speak out against racism and for personal responsibility to eradicate it. With children, use the storybook *Everyone Belongs* as a starting point for conversation. With teens and adults, explore how anti-racism action looks. Continue to study and understand racism as it manifested in the past and does so today.

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